

-UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

CORRECTED

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Investigation of:

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M/V KITION COLLISION WITH

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I-10 BRIDGE,

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BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA,

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FEBRUARY 10, 2007

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Docket No.: DCA07FM013

Interview of: RODDY LACOUR

Thursday,
March 8, 2007

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice.

BEFORE: BILL WOODY

APPEARANCES:

BILL WOODY
National Transportation Safety Board

BARRY STRAUCH
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL VITT, ESQ.
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RAYMOUND BALL
Master Chief Petty Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Roddy LaCour:	
By Mr. Woody	4
By Mr. Strauch	17
By Chief Ball	24
By Unidentified Speaker	26
By Unidentified Speaker	30
By Mr. Woody	30
By Unidentified Speaker	30
By Chief Ball	33

I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEW OF CAPTAIN RODDY LACOUR

BY MR. WOODY:

Q. If you would just recite your name for the record, please.

A. Roddy LaCour.

Q. And your position, sir?

A. Captain on the tug Peggy H.

Q. All right. Captain, what we'd like to do is to revisit what your vessel did early in the undocking of the Kition from Apex Dock. We'd like to just go ahead and ask you -- tell us again from the time that, perhaps, you got the first order. But first of all, where were you when you got your first order from the pilot?

A. We were on the starboard bow.

Q. You had made up on the bow already?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. So, how did you pick your spot on the bow? Tell us about that.

A. How did I what?

Q. You -- picked your spot on the bow. I mean, you knew to go to the bow, but the pilot had not given you any orders yet?

A. Oh, no, the pilot came aboard. He said to get a line

1 up on the bow. And we got below the forecastle and sent a line
2 up, made it fast, and waited for the first order.

3 Q. I see. Okay. And then, the first order came -- I
4 think you mentioned it was at 7:05?

5 A. Yeah, it was around that time, around a little after
6 7. The first order to push hard straight in for them to let
7 the lines go.

8 Q. All right. Now, what we'd like to do is, just go
9 back and revisit that time from the time you got the first
10 order to push until you got the order to pull on the bow.
11 Anything that happened in that time, just tell us about it.

12 A. Alrighty. We got our first order to push in hard at
13 approximately 7:05. That's my timeline, which might not have
14 any -- it may be five or ten minutes off one-way or the other,
15 but using my timeline.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. At about 7:05, he said to push hard, and I believe
18 they started letting the lines go from the stern forward. And
19 one tug was positioned between the bow and the stern, I'm
20 probably favoring the stern, and one was on the stern.

21 Q. All right.

22 A. So, I don't remember, but I would imagine -- usually
23 that they tell them to push, also.

24 Q. I see.

25 A. And we started letting lines go from stern to bow,

1 and when they were letting lines go on the bow, at one point, I
2 had to slow down. I told them that we had a line. When they
3 let go of the lines, it was taking a while to pick them up, I
4 would have to slow down or drop back just a hair, so I wouldn't
5 get it in the wheel or anything like that. But they started
6 picking it up. We had no problems. We slid back a little
7 ways, I kept pushing the whole time. I let the boat slide back
8 a little bit, and we continued pushing hard. They got all the
9 lines in, and I think we may or may not have waited a few
10 minutes on traffic. And he gave the order to all stop
11 everybody, and he told me to go back half.

12 Q. All right.

13 A. And we started backing half, and a little while
14 later, he told the tugs on the stern, or maybe right at the
15 same time, he told me to go back hard, and then he told us the
16 stern tugs to get in position and get ready to push or push,
17 and we started backing hard. And he told the stern tugs to
18 come ahead hard, and so the ship started turning. And about, I
19 guess, about approximately 7:38 my time, it became apparent --
20 it looked like we were going to hit the bridge, and my deck
21 hand was already stationed. I had already stationed him
22 outside the wheelhouse, and I told him to get ready to let go
23 of the lines.

24 And so, he got pretty close to it, or -- I mean,
25 right before it started hitting the guardrail, I told him to

1 let the line go. So, I told -- and I -- we were working
2 channel 77 VHF, and I told -- I said on the radio that Peggy H
3 will be letting the line go now, and I put the engines all
4 stopped and came ahead on them and put slack in the line. At
5 this point, we were pretty much perpendicular to the ship. And
6 he threw the line off, and as he was throwing the line off, the
7 guardrail started collapsing around the bridge. The -- I guess
8 the bulbous bow which was under the water was, I guess,
9 probably started hitting it first, and part of it fell on the
10 stern and leaned the boat over a little bit, and as soon as our
11 line was free off the boat, I went full stern and tried to stay
12 clear of it and to back out of the way. And we backed out of
13 the way, cleared everything. The ship ended up hitting -- it
14 hit the bridge part -- the concrete part, and about that time,
15 that's when we cleared everything, and I came ahead and got out
16 the way and went around the other side of the bridge pier or
17 pylon.

18 And basically, the pilot asked if everything was okay, and I
19 said, we had check everything out and make sure we weren't
20 holed or anything like that. And we checked the damage, and we
21 didn't have any -- you know, a quick check, apparently, we
22 didn't have any damage. And I asked him if he needed any more
23 assistance. He said no, that was okay, he thought he had it.
24 And we proceeded to the dock to do further checks, and we
25 determined everything was okay. And I asked him again, and he

1 said he didn't need any help. He had the Gladys B and Margaret
2 Cooper alongside, and a little while after that, he called.
3 He needed some assistance, and we went back and helped him.

4 Q. Okay. What I'd like to do is go back now to the time
5 that you had to do a little shifting, because of your concern
6 with the mooring line. You said you were pushing all the time
7 you were slipping, changing your position on the side of the
8 ship?

9 A. Uh-huh.

10 Q. Now, how many minutes would you -- did you then push
11 after that until you got the order to pull on the bow? Do you
12 have any idea time-wise?

13 A. No, I don't. I --

14 Q. Did you -- during this time, after the shifting or
15 the -- and you noticed you had to tell the captain you had to
16 slow down and stop -- the pilot, that is -- did the bow seem to
17 swing one way or the other?

18 A. To me, no, not apparently. I didn't notice anything.
19 They were taking the lines, and I could see ahead of the
20 ship -- I could see the dock, and I didn't really see anything
21 moving.

22 Q. I see.

23 A. As we were pushing.

24 Q. Now, after this, and before you got the order to
25 pull, did the pilot give you any orders to push harder, or was

1 he concerned about how much you were pushing?

2 A. Well, we were already pushing hard.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I think we were pushing hard, so that was it, and it
5 looked like the ship was pretty much staying put.

6 Q. Okay. Now, the ship's crew has told us that the
7 vessel came off the pier, out to about 30 meters, so, like 100
8 feet. Did you know about when that occurred?

9 A. What was that?

10 Q. Well, we talked -- in our interviews with the ship's
11 crew, the officers on the ship, they said the ship moved off
12 the pier eventually about 30 meters, and it still remained
13 parallel with the pier. Do you remember anything like that
14 occurring?

15 A. Well, I could see ahead of the ship, because I was on
16 the starboard side. I really couldn't see -- I could see the
17 part of the ship, but I mean, the very bow of the ship's away
18 from the dock to begin with. Naturally, it comes to a point
19 that I couldn't see. I couldn't tell how far the ship was from
20 the dock. And when it was alongside, I really couldn't see
21 whether it was alongside or off the dock.

22 Q. Oh, okay. Because, the reason I asked that is,
23 they -- the ship says that's when the pilot started having the
24 bow pulled around. So I was just asking if it -- if there was
25 a time you recalled any kind of objective of that distance,

1 realizing that you are on the other side of the ship.

2 A. Well, when he did give the order for me to start
3 backing hard, we were mid stream well away from the dock.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I'm not sure how far that we were away from the dock
6 when he told me to go back hard.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. The first order was the back half that was actually
9 pull him off the dock, and when we did go back hard, he was
10 midstream.

11 Q. Okay. Do you have any recollection, or did you know
12 at the time whether the after tugs were still pushing at the
13 time?

14 A. No, I don't think they were. I think they were just
15 floating and just keeping themselves alongside.

16 Q. Of course, now, they had no lines to the ship, as I
17 understand it.

18 A. No, they did not.

19 Q. Okay. Now, go back -- just ask this question one
20 more time. Did the pilot indicate to you that he wanted more
21 pushing before you got the order to pull?

22 A. I don't remember. I don't remember him saying
23 that -- saying anything more, because we were already pushing
24 hard.

25 Q. Uh-huh. Okay. Do you have any recollection of the

1 bow swinging to the right before you got the order to pull on
2 the bow?

3 A. No, I don't.

4 Q. Okay. Well, that's what this is -- you probably
5 figured out, this is what we're interested in, to find out
6 whether the heading changed, or if the bow swung or changed its
7 heading because of your having to stop for a moment. And by
8 the way, how long were you stopped and not pushing as much as
9 you could push, when you're doing this shifting of your
10 location?

11 A. Well, we pushed the whole time. I think I just -- I
12 was just coming ahead on the starboard engine, and I just
13 backed a little bit on the port engine as she slid down,
14 because I had hard left rudder on her, but maybe 30 seconds, it
15 might not have been pushing hard. But I was pushing the whole
16 time. I released pressure for maybe 30 seconds. That's about
17 it.

18 Q. All right. So when you resume pushing as hard as you
19 could -- again, I'm just revisiting the same question I just
20 asked -- you don't recall the pilot urging you to push harder?

21 A. No, I don't recall.

22 Q. Is that something you think you would recall?

23 A. Yeah. I'm -- I would imagine that the only order --
24 I told him I was going to slide back a little bit, because, you
25 know, I might have to stop and slow down or something, but I

1 just slid back a little bit, and then I resumed pushing.

2 Q. And there -- you had resumed pushing, because you got
3 your location changed? Or was it because they got the mooring
4 line up, or what was the reason you were able to start pushing
5 again?

6 A. Well, I just dropped back a little bit, and the line
7 was coming up.

8 Q. Okay. When you say --

9 A. It had started coming up. Once it started coming up,
10 I knew everything was fine.

11 Q. All right. Okay. Now, there's a number of lines
12 going up from the bow. Do you remember which line this was
13 that concerned you?

14 A. Yes, it was one coming off the starboard bow. I'm
15 not sure how many lines they had in the water. I'm thinking
16 there were a few in the water, and the concern of the line was,
17 it was a cable, and it has a short rope pennant on it. And
18 because of the current, the line was pretty much straight up
19 and down, but after -- if it stays in a while, it may swing
20 back far enough to, you know, probably -- we could possibly
21 catch it in the wheel, but it never came close enough, but I
22 didn't want to take any chances. I slowed down and dropped
23 back just a hair, which is when the line started coming up.

24 Q. All right. And, again, this is a -- from the time
25 that you started -- resumed pushing at full power, until you

1 got the order to pull, about how long was that?

2 A. I don't remember.

3 Q. I can understand that it would be hard to do.

4 A. Well, we were pushing, but I don't remember -- I know
5 that we had -- we did a lot of jobs, but I don't remember if we
6 had to wait. Because, it's not unusual to let all the lines
7 go --

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. -- just keep holding the ship alongside it, wait for
10 traffic, or something like that, and I don't remember. It
11 wouldn't be something I would have logged. But, I couldn't
12 tell you. It may have been five minutes; it could have been 20
13 minutes. I'm really not sure.

14 Q. But it was five minutes or more that you were pushing
15 before you got the order to pull? Because, I didn't -- maybe I
16 should repeat that again. So, you -- once you resumed pushing,
17 you pushed for how long before you got the order to back? You
18 say it could be five to 25 minutes?

19 A. Yeah. I'm really not sure.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I'm really not sure.

22 Q. Well, then, could we -- all right. Once you started
23 pulling on the bow, did the pilot ask for more power? I
24 realize he said half a stern and he said full a stern, if I
25 recall correctly. Did he ever need any more power stern than

1 you were giving, say, during most of the swing?

2 A. No, no. He gave an order to back half, and I believe
3 that was to get the ship out. And then, I may have -- I backed
4 a few minutes. I'm really not sure how long.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And then the next order was to back hard, and that
7 was the last order.

8 Q. Okay. To back hard? Okay, that was the last order.
9 Now, the reason one of our questions is, that the pilot
10 indicated that he lost some power -- some pushing power in the
11 bow, because of your concern for a line. And apparently, there
12 was a rumor started that a line got in -- possibly got -- could
13 have gotten in your screw, and that sort of thing. Can you
14 tell us anything about that? Does that bring anything to mind?

15 A. No.

16 Q. At no time you had any line get in your screw?

17 A. Absolutely not.

18 Q. Okay. Now, you said you did shift, but you were
19 still pushing at the same time. How far did you shift your
20 position on the bow? Was it 15 feet, ten feet, the beam or
21 your tugboat, any kind of reference you want to use.

22 A. It wasn't very far, probably, maybe five to ten feet
23 at the most.

24 Q. Five to ten feet, and this took roughly 30 seconds, I
25 think you said.

1 A. Yeah, something like that.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. It may have been less than that. It was just for a
4 brief moment, and then when the line started coming up, that
5 was no reason to drop back anymore.

6 Q. All right. That pretty well covers the reason for
7 our call. The -- just as long as you -- you mentioned about
8 leaving the -- at the time of collision with the bridge pier,
9 you mentioned that you backed away, and did the -- was the ship
10 responsive to your request to let your line go? Did it take
11 long to get them to let your line go?

12 A. No, and I don't remember even seeing anybody up
13 there. I know they had a lot of people running on the bow
14 toward the back, and I don't remember. We let the line -- the
15 line was made up on the tug and on the other end of that was
16 made up on the ship.

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. And when we let the line go, we didn't have time to
19 wait on them anyway.

20 Q. I see, so --

21 A. That was my -- my deck hand ran on the main deck and
22 threw the eye off the bit, and we started, you know, as soon as
23 we were clear, we started backing and let the line go. The
24 line stayed attached to the ship.

25 Q. The ship, okay. That was quite clear to clarify

1 that. Now, after the collision, can you describe the motion of
2 the ship? Did it -- after the bow hit the bridge pier, what
3 did the ship do?

4 A. Well, the ship was swinging, and I believe we were
5 immediately above the bridge -- the ship might have -- the
6 stern of the ship might have been slightly underneath the edge
7 of the bridge. It might have been right under the bridge, and
8 the bow was swinging -- while he was turning on the right, the
9 bow was swinging, and basically, that's about it. The stern
10 was almost stationery. It might have been dropping back a
11 little bit. He had two tugs holding, and I think that he was
12 underneath the -- at an angle to the dock right there, so it
13 was in slightly slack water. I would imagine it wasn't falling
14 back very far. I wasn't -- I really wasn't watching the stern
15 that much.

16 Q. All right.

17 A. I was paying attention to the bow and the bridge at
18 this point, but --

19 Q. All right.

20 A. -- as far as I know, the bow was swinging well, and
21 it just over lapped the bridge at the guardrail and stuff.

22 Q. Did the bow stop when it hit the bridge?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. It did? And what did the stern start to do?

25 A. Well, the stern immediately -- when it hit, the

1 momentum stopped on the bow, and the stern immediately swung
2 back into the channel or swung to starboard.

3 Q. Okay. Now, at the time of impact -- just visualize
4 for me the best you can from your position, how was the ship
5 lined up with the bridge at that time? Was it parallel to the
6 bridge, or was it turned a little bit into the bridge? Can you
7 describe it?

8 A. It was close to parallel, but if I remember right, I
9 believe the stern -- it might have been the -- from the dock --
10 let's say from the dock to the pier being 90 degrees, it was
11 slightly less. The stern might have been slightly down the
12 river from the bow, or it could be pretty close to parallel.

13 Q. Okay. All right. Well, Captain, I want to thank
14 you. I know this has not taken long, but this is the line of
15 questioning we wanted to revisit with you, because we want to
16 get your statement again on this particular part of the
17 evolution of the bow coming off the pier. And I think you
18 pretty well gave it to us clearly. Barry, do you have any
19 questions you'd like to ask?

20 MR. STRAUCH: Yeah, I have a few questions. Thank
21 you.

22 MR. WOODY: Okay.

23 BY MR. STRAUCH:

24 Q. Yes, Captain. I just want to follow up on some of
25 the questions that Bill just asked you. Had you ever worked at

1 that particular dock before?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. About -- could you estimate how many times you had?

4 A. It would be a guess. I would say around maybe 200
5 jobs.

6 Q. Oh, okay. And of those 200 different times you have
7 undocked -- were those all undockings or some dockings, too?

8 A. Dockings and undockings.

9 Q. Okay. Is it fair to say about half of those would
10 have been undockings?

11 A. Right.

12 Q. Okay, of those -- let's say 100 or so, how many --
13 how has the ship come out of that particular dock? Were they
14 all one way, or were they different ways that the ship came
15 out?

16 A. Well, they either -- they do it two ways -- well,
17 three ways, actually. They can -- they'll breast off of the
18 dock slightly into the current, and they'll go up about --
19 again, this would be a guess, about a half a mile, and they'll
20 turn there. Its called the old ferry landing, and they'll turn
21 right above it or right around the old ferry landing. Then,
22 they'll turn to the right and then head back down through the
23 bridge, or they can go -- I think it's two miles up to Exxon
24 and turn right off of the dock at Exxon. And the third way,
25 and probably the most common way, is they breast out into the

1 river, drop back through the bridge, and turn to the right.

2 Q. Okay. Now, did the pilot tell you which -- or the
3 other tug captains, which way he wanted to undock the vessel?

4 A. No, not that I recall, no.

5 Q. Okay. From looking back on it now, how do you think
6 he wanted to undock the vessel? Which of those three ways?

7 MR. VITT: That calls for speculation. I don't
8 really think that he can answer that.

9 THE WITNESS: Yeah. I don't know. I really can't
10 tell. This is what he did, so I don't know.

11 BY MR. STRAUCH:

12 Q. Okay. Have you ever worked with this pilot before?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. About how often?

15 A. I'm not sure. Once again, his number's 38. I've
16 done a lot of jobs with 38, but I believe it was a different
17 pilot. He's a newer pilot, so he might have assumed that
18 number.

19 Q. Yes, he did. He assumed it from his father?

20 A. I'm not sure. I'm not sure who he was.

21 Q. Yes, we learned that in the course of our work on
22 scene. So, you don't know if the number 38 was this particular
23 pilot or somebody else? The times you've worked with number 38
24 before?

25 A. Well, I have worked with 38 before. I may have

1 worked with him before, but I knew the older 38 voice who
2 wasn't his voice. But of course, we have a list of names, and
3 I knew it was a Strahan, so I knew it was a relative, I guess,
4 you could say.

5 Q. Uh-huh.

6 A. And also, on that note, on the turn out of that dock,
7 it's called Apex Oil, but the biggest mistake of ships I turned
8 was in the past, it was just a general cargoes dock, and we
9 turned gear bulk ships -- dry ships, cargo ships, not oil
10 ships. Just -- I would say, in a year -- or in the last year
11 or possibly since the hurricane, it became Apex Oil.

12 Q. Oh, okay. So, I guess what you're saying is, you
13 don't -- you couldn't say how often, if any, you had worked
14 with this particular pilot before?

15 A. No.

16 Q. In your experience, how often was -- when you worked
17 with a pilot undocking a vessel, does the pilot brief you on
18 what -- beforehand on what he expects of everybody and how he
19 intends to undock the vessel?

20 A. Well, sometimes, it's just assumed. And sometimes
21 they do, and sometimes they don't. But, you know, there's
22 certain ways you do it. Sometimes, we'll ask if they don't
23 tell us, you know, because it'll make a difference how we set
24 up our lines and what not, and it -- some do, and some don't.
25 Like I said, it's an assumed -- sometimes, it's assumed;

1 sometimes, it's not.

2 Q. Okay. And you can't say which way is done more often
3 than another?

4 A. Not really, no. I guess, lately, at that particular
5 dock, most of the ships do drop below the bridge and turn.

6 Q. Okay. And my question is about pilots briefing you
7 beforehand. And, you said you really can't say whether they --
8 whether the majority of pilots do brief you or don't brief you,
9 is that what you're saying?

10 A. Yes. Some do, some don't.

11 Q. Which way do you prefer?

12 A. Oh, I would prefer if they briefed me. But, like I
13 said, sometimes, for instance, turning out of Exxon which would
14 be above that dock -- a couple of miles before that dock on the
15 east side of the river, they will come off the dock and turn to
16 the right. I mean, it's just assumed to have no reason to do
17 it any other way. Each dock is different.

18 Q. Okay. You said that you prefer pilots to brief you.
19 Why is that?

20 A. Well, once again, if they would do something -- or
21 just in case that they would do something out of the ordinary,
22 so, you know, it might make a difference how much line or slack
23 you leave out or where you would position yourself.

24 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any uncharted wreckage near
25 that dock on that side of the river?

1 A. In the channel, no. I believe we have sunken barge
2 about the second or third pylon, going towards the east bank.

3 Q. But that's --

4 A. It's immediately above the bridge and above a pylon,
5 but it's not in a ship channel at all. That's the only one I
6 know of.

7 Q. Is that on a chart?

8 A. It may or may not be. I don't know. It was --
9 someone told me about it. It could be just a partial
10 something -- I'm not sure what it is. I believe I was -- it's
11 been a long time. Someone told me possibly it was a barge or
12 something and it sunk here years ago and maybe floated down.
13 I'm not sure, but it's completely out of the ship channel.

14 Q. Okay. Now, I just wanted to follow up a little bit
15 on what you and Bill had discussed. At one point, you told the
16 pilot that you were going to have to power back, is that
17 correct?

18 A. When we were letting the lines go.

19 Q. Now --

20 A. Now, I told him I may have to -- I was watching the
21 line. I'm not sure exactly what I said, but what happened --
22 the situation that happened was, I told him that -- they had
23 let go of the head line, and because of the current, sometimes
24 they come back, and it was cable, so, you better stay straight
25 up and down. But it looked like it was getting a little angled

1 towards me. And I told him I may have to stop or slow down so
2 I wouldn't get in the wheels in case it came close. And I'd
3 slowed one engine and stopped -- I may have stopped one engine.
4 I was coming ahead on one just to let the boat slide back a
5 little bit. We slid back just a hair, and the line started
6 coming up, so there was no reason to drop back anymore, so I
7 resumed pushing hard.

8 Q. Okay. And you could not estimate about how long you
9 had reduced your power, is that correct?

10 A. No. It was just a very few seconds. It wasn't long
11 at all.

12 Q. Okay. Do you remember where you and the vessel were
13 at that particular point when you had to do that?

14 A. I'm sorry?

15 Q. At what point -- how close to the dock were you when
16 you had to do this -- when you had to reduce your power?

17 A. We were still alongside the dock. They had just let
18 go of the head lines. So, we were still alongside the dock.

19 Q. So the vessel hadn't moved at that point?

20 A. I don't think so. Now, once again, I couldn't see
21 its proximity to the dock. I was on the opposite side, but it
22 basically looked like it was still alongside the dock.

23 Q. Okay. And do you remember what the pilot's response
24 was when you said that to him?

25 A. No, I don't. I don't know if he responded. I don't

1 remember.

2 Q. Okay. All right.

3 MR. STRAUCH: I don't have any further questions.

4 CHIEF BALL: Raymound Ball, just a very few.

5 BY CHIEF BALL:

6 Q. Now, Captain [remember] when you were pushing and all
7 the lines were released.

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. Okay -- how much of a time difference from the time
10 the lines were released until the second order to pull? You
11 understand?

12 A. You mean from pushing hard to --

13 Q. Yes. From the time all the lines were released. What
14 was the time difference between that and the pilot order to
15 pull? It could have been after the second order to pull. You
16 understand, you go from pushing hard to --

17 A. I don't know. I really don't know. I would say, if
18 you have a last -- you know, that wouldn't really do any good
19 either. I'm really not sure.

20 Q. Okay. That's fine. My second question, whenever you
21 got your order to assist the Kition, what dock was she moored
22 at?

23 A. Apex oil.

24 Q. Okay. She was boarded at Apex? Okay, that's also
25 known as Baton Rouge, or the Baton Rouge dock number 2?

1 A. Right.

2 Q. Okay. All right. Now, you mentioned a sunken barge
3 that you think that's on the east bank, or --

4 A. I can show you.

5 Q. Well, say if you're looking at an aerial photograph
6 of the Baton Rouge harbor - We will describe the location that
7 the captain is pointing out. --

8 A. (indiscernible) prior to the interview of --

9 Q. Okay, where the aerial.... the photograph, where
10 your -- the captain is pointing at, and you're talking about
11 this possible wreckage, that just north of the I-10 bridge, is
12 basically near the second pylon near the east bank. So,
13 basically, if you were to go look at the I-10 bridge, the first
14 pylon on the east bank, then the second one and the third one
15 is the one that got struck. So, that means that you were just
16 north of the I-10 bridge, very close to the second pylon?

17 CHIEF BALL: Did you guys catch that one?

18 MR. WOODY: Yes, I did.

19 CHIEF BALL: Okay.

20 BY CHIEF BALL:

21 Q. Okay, Captain, were you aware of any sunken barges on
22 the west bank?

23 A. No. Not that I know of. I don't know of anything,
24 not anything recently, no.

25 Q. Okay. That's fine. I apologize. Now, back to the

1 other sunken barge near the second pylon on the I-10 bridge.
2 Has that ever been an issue to [affecting] vessels in that
3 area?

4 A. No.

5 Q. No? And is there any other possible submerged.
6 sunken vessels of any sort that have ever been an issue between
7 the I-10 bridge and the 190 bridge, that you know of?

8 A. No, not that I know of.

9 Q. Okay. None that you know of. Okay. And have you
10 ever heard any -- this is just for knowledge -- have you ever
11 heard of a sunken barge just north of the 190 bridge?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. I know you're -- I have to ask --

14 A. I understand.

15 Q. Let's see.

16 CHIEF BALL: Generally, that's all I've got.

17 MR. WOODY: Okay. I think that's it. Barry, do you
18 have anything further?

19 MR. STRAUCH: No, that's all for me, Bill.

20 MR. WOODY: That's all for me, too, and -- I want to
21 thank you very much for coming in, Mr. Vitt, and the Captain.

22 BY MR. VITT:

23 Q. Okay. Roddy, how long have you been a tug captain
24 performing ship assist work?

25 A. About 25 years.

1 Q. In those 25 years, have you ever asked a pilot to
2 brief to you and gotten a negative response? By that, I mean,
3 mind your own business, blah, blah, blah, something like that?

4 A. Nothing like that, no.

5 Q. Have you ever had -- if you can estimate how many
6 times that you have been briefed prior to a maneuver?

7 A. Maybe -- once again, if the [maneuver] would be
8 something out of the ordinary, maybe 30 percent.

9 Q. Maybe 30 percent?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And so, it wouldn't be unusual, then, for a pilot
12 doing a maneuver that's different from the expected to brief
13 you?

14 A. (indiscernible).

15 Q. You talk about assuming a maneuver. Are you talking
16 about things -- like, when you're on the west bank, a right
17 turnout or on the east bank , a left turnout?

18 A. Right.

19 MR. Woody: Mr. Vitt we are having a little trouble
20 hearing the captain. Could you just have him speak a little
21 louder? You're loud and clear.

22 THE WITNESS: Yes, that's correct.

23 BY MR VITT:

24 Q. And in the discussion -- the assumption you referred
25 to earlier that you were speaking of assuming certain maneuvers

1 were about to take place, you referred to things like when a
2 ship is on the west side, she performs a right turnout. When
3 it's on the east side, she performs a left turnout?

4 A. You're right. That's correct.

5 Q. You're also speaking about things with particular
6 regard to Apex or the general cargo dock, number two, that
7 either they drop below the bridge or proceed northbound to
8 turn?

9 A. Right. That is correct.

10 Q. Is that what you expect?

11 A. Well, yeah, for one of the three options, yes. That
12 would be what I would expect.

13 Q. Of those three options, would your makeup and the
14 other tugs placement have been any different?

15 A. Probably secondary in (indiscernible) variables.

16 Q. So, the placement of the two tugs on the stern and
17 you on the bow could have been that he meant to drop down or
18 proceed northbound?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. But you didn't know which?

21 A. Right.

22 Q. You did not see anything unusual with the makeup?

23 A. Yes.

24 MR. STRAUCH: But wouldn't that be speculation?

25 MR VITT: That's speculation, but it is within his

1 particular expertise.

2 MR. STRAUCH: Well, I don't understand. If we're not
3 going to exclude, maybe we should include speculation. I mean,
4 we don't pull a (indiscernible) and then not others.

5 MR VITT: When he expected and the routine, the
6 maneuvers that are performed at such a place, if it is done the
7 same way many times, he testified he has been doing it a
8 hundred times. I think you can infer that this maneuver was
9 out of the ordinary.

10 MR. STRAUCH: Well, essentially, how can we infer
11 this as out of the ordinary again?

12 MR VITT: Well, the -- he testified that he placed
13 the tug with power forward, and that the position of the other
14 boats was consistent with other times he had come out of that
15 pier.

16 BY MR VITT:

17 Q. Is that true?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And, if that's the case, there was nothing different
20 to alert you that he intended to do a turn off the dock?

21 A. Right.

22 Q. And you were pre-briefed, so you didn't know. That's
23 not speculation, that's fact.

24 MR. STRAUCH: Okay.

25 MR VITT: That's all I have.

1 MR? STRAUCH: Well, Bill, I have a follow up
2 question.

3 MR. WOODY: Please go ahead.

4 BY MR STRAUCH:

5 Q. Okay. Captain, did you ask this particular pilot for
6 a briefing?

7 A. No, I didn't.

8 Q. Okay.

9 MR STRAUCH: All right. That's all. I have no
10 further questions.

11 BY MR. WOODY:

12 Q. But just along the same line -- Bill Woody --
13 Captain, the -- what was the first indication to you that
14 something was different in this departure from this pier?

15 A. Well, when he told me to go back hard, and he told
16 the two stern tugs to drop all the way back to the stern, and I
17 guess at the point when he told them to start pushing hard, it
18 became apparent he was going to turn there.

19 Q. And this -- and did you expect this to be the way he
20 turned out of that pier?

21 A. No, I didn't expect that at all.

22 Q. Okay.

23 MR STRAUCH: Bill, now I have a question again.

24 MR. WOODY: Okay.

25 BY MR STRAUCH:

1 Q. Okay, you said it became apparent that that was how
2 he wanted to turn?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. Well, what exactly made that apparent to you?

5 A. Well, once the tugs on the stern started pushing
6 hard, I started backing hard, the ship immediately when it
7 started swinging to starboard, and it was no longer going
8 upriver or dropping down and started turning, and it was still
9 well above the bridge.

10 Q. Okay. Now, in your approximate or estimated 100
11 times that you have undocked a vessel at that particular dock,
12 have you ever seen that kind of maneuver from a pilot before?

13 A. Yes. We had. But what I remember, we had turned one
14 ship -- I'm not sure when -- it was a gear bulk ship, I imagine
15 around 600 feet long, and it was during low-river conditions
16 and we had turned in there, but the ship had rubbed on the wood
17 on the guards. And that's the only time I remember. I heard
18 mention of -- and I may have done it, I don't remember, a very
19 small ship, maybe slightly larger than a tug we may have turned
20 out. I don't remember of any right off hand until I asked.
21 But, you know, it was a much smaller vessel, nothing near the
22 size of this one.

23 Q. Okay. Do you remember about when that happened?
24 When this other incident -- or other occurrence happened, I
25 should say?

1 A. No, I don't. And all I remember it was the gear bulk
2 ship before the -- right before the end or whenever it was that
3 Japan dropped shipping paper out of Baton Rouge. But it was
4 before that.

5 Q. It was a couple years ago, is that true?

6 A. It's been longer than that. It's maybe five, maybe
7 more years than that. It's been a while. And the river was
8 low at the time.

9 Q. And how would that have made a difference, the river
10 height?

11 A. Oh, a lot more current, a lot more force working
12 against you.

13 Q. And what effect would that have had on the ability of
14 a pilot to turn the vessel around at the dock the way this
15 pilot apparently intended to do?

16 A. Well, that's a lot of -- when there's more current,
17 naturally if the bow would swing out into the current, the
18 current would catch the bow, but there's a swinging once the
19 ship starts to parallel into the current, it also catches the
20 stern. Now, the stern may have been shrouded a little bit from
21 the current. It could have been in slightly slack water, but
22 still most of the ship was catching all the current, so also
23 the port side was catching all the additional current, with the
24 river being high, so the swing usually turns into linear motion
25 going forward.

1 Q. Okay. And it sounds like the major differences
2 between the other time you had experienced that and this
3 particular incident was river height, the current, and the size
4 of the vessel. Were there any other differences?

5 A. No, not really. That's enough.

6 Q. Yes. Okay.

7 MR STRAUCH: I don't have any more questions.

8 BY CHIEF BALL:

9 Q. Captain, Ray Ball here. During the time when the
10 vessel was departing the dock, okay, and the pilot had [spoken]
11 and he had the two stern tugs pushing. At any point did he ever
12 tell the stern tugs to stop pushing, if you could recall?

13 A. Not that I recall. He may have slowed them.

14 Q. You do not recall?

15 A. Not that I recall.

16 Q. He may have slowed?

17 A. The stern was -- which way the stern was going up,
18 I'm thinking he may have, but I don't know. I don't remember.

19 Q. You don't remember what he was doing?

20 A. No.

21 Q. (indiscernible) but the stern was a little too close?

22 A. I remember him telling them to push, but I don't
23 remember anything after that. Once we started turning and we
24 got close to the bridge, I wasn't looking back there to see.

25 Q. Okay.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's all I've got.

2 MR. WOODY: Well, thank you, again.

3 THE WITNESS: Like I said, it was a weird day
4 (indiscernible).

5 MR. WOODY: Okay.

6 THE WITNESS: All right. Thank you.

7 MR. WOODY: All right.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

9 MR. WOODY: Okay.

10 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
11 matter was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: M/V KITTON COLLISION
 WITH I-10 BRIDGE
 BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA
 FEBRUARY 10, 2007

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-07-FM-013

PLACE:

DATE: March 8, 2007

was held according to the record, and that this is the
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Pamela J. Legg
Transcriber